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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 000103

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TAGS: PREL KPRP PGOV PHUM IR UK

SUBJECT: (S) IRAN: UK READOUT ON EL BARADEI'S LONDON

MEETINGS: NOTHING NEW

REF: JANUARY 8 EMBASSY LONDON -- NEA/IR E-MAILS

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Maura Connolly for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary. IAEA Head Mohammed El Baradei raised no new points during his January 7 meetings in London with Foreign Secretary Miliband and other senior UK officials, ahead of El

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Baradei's visit later this week to Tehran. Per ref, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) told London Iran Watcher (Poloff) that El Baradei repeated what FCO called his "standard arguments and criticism" that the E3 3 governments are wrong to insist on suspension, "a strategic decision" in El Baradei's words, before any E3 3 negotiations with Iran on its nuclear program can begin. El Baradei continues to argue Iran is unlikely to respond as desired to the dual track approach. FCO contacts said Miliband and other senior UK interlocutors, "pushed back" in defense of the E3 3 approach; they told El Baradei the June 2006 incentives package is not only generous but is well understood by Iran. Miliband continues to find El Baradei a frustrating interlocutor, but sees it as vital that the E3 3 continue to engage vigorously with him, in order to reinforce El Baradei's intellectual understanding that Iran has not done enough to win international trust, as well as to counter El Baradei's personal instinct to, in El Baradei's own words, "get Iran out of the international dog house."

¶2. (S) Summary cont. Separately, FCO on January 8 provided a copy (ref) of a November 16 letter on the nuclear issue from Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki to Miliband and Miliband's December 20 reply; neither letter appears to raise new information or proposals. FCO also argued to Poloff that, in the next UNSCR, the need for unity outweighs the importance of a full designation of Bank Melli. End summary.

El Baradei Comes to London

¶3. (S) Poloff received a readout of El Baradei's London

meetings from FCO Iran Multilateral Team Leader Will Gelling and FCO Counterproliferation Department Regional Head Isabella McCrae; McCrae had not participated in the meetings, but shared notes and comments from Simon Smith, the UK's Ambassador to the IAEA. Smith had participated in El Baradei's four January 7 meetings, with UK intelligence officials; with Minister of State for Energy (i.e. junior minister) Malcolm Wicks; with Simon McDonald, Gordon Brown's senior foreign policy advisor in Number 10; and with Foreign Secretary Miliband. PM Gordon Brown shook El Baradei's hand

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during the visit to Number 10, but reportedly had no substantive exchange with him.

¶4. (S) According to Gelling and McCrae, El Baradei's London meetings involved little more than a "mutual recitation of (previous) positions." El Baradei reportedly went over familiar ground with all his UK interlocutors, critiquing the E3 3's dual track approach as unproductive and flawed in its insistence on IRI suspension as a condition of negotiation, and raising no new points or proposals on the Iran nuclear issue. Miliband and other UK interlocutors reportedly "pushed back hard" in defense of the E3 3 approach, defending the incentives package on offer to Iran as generous. UK further argued the incentives package was thoroughly briefed to the Iranians, who should already be well aware of its contents.

¶5. (S) McCrae said that, although El Baradei did not go into the details of what he intends to say in Tehran, the FCO expects he will not attempt to offer any new strategic-level proposals to the IRI, but will in general focus on implementation and technical issues arising from the IAEA Work Plan.

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Baradei's Personal Instincts: An Ongoing Project

¶6. (S) McCrae said Ambassador Smith views El Baradei as deeply, perhaps permanently, conflicted on Iran: torn between El Baradei's evidence-based knowledge, (in Simon's phrase, Baradei's "logical side"), of Iran's poor track record in doing what it needs to win international trust on the nuclear issue, and El Baradei's "North-South instincts" which, according to Smith, continually drive El Baradei to work, in El Baradei's own words, to "bring Iran out of the international dog house." Foreign Secretary Miliband, according to McCrae and Gelling, concurs in this view of El Baradei and agrees with his FCO advisors that it will require continual E3 3 engagement with El Baradei to counteract his visceral, "North-South" view of Tehran's position and to reinforce the intellectual understanding El Baradei's "logical side" has reached on Iran's need to do a great deal more to deserve full international trust.

Mottaki-Miliband Correspondence

¶7. (SBU) Also on January 8, Gelling gave Poloff hard copies (ref) of a November 16 letter from Iranian FM Mottaki to Miliband and a December 20 Miliband reply letter, on the nuclear issue. Gelling said the UK had not previously shared the letters with any other governments because in UK view neither the Mottaki letter, nor Miliband's categorical reply, raised any new issues or information. (Embassy comment. Poloff's initial reading concurs with this UK judgment: the Mottaki letter delves into the details of Iran's reprocessing history in order to demonstrate IRI's innocent intent, while Miliband's reply reviews the history of the international community's objections to the Iranian program and says "the choice of how the nuclear file is chosen is Iran's. End comment).

¶8. (S) Gelling also shared that, with respect to ongoing E3 3 consultations on UNSCR elements, UK Political Director Mark Lyall Grant believes that an insistence in the draft resolution on including Bank Melli as a full designation, rather than simply as institution with respect to which UN member states should exercise vigilance, is likely to delay Russian and Chinese agreement to a resolution for at least two more months. Gelling said Lyall Grant believes language on exercise of diligence on Melli is a viable fall-back position and that obtaining agreement on a third resolution sooner rather than later should be the "E3 1" priority.

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